

USDA *news*

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

How We're Spreading The Word About Big Changes Ahead In Your TV Reception

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

You thought it was traumatic for *Cinderella* when, at midnight after the ball, her coach turned into a pumpkin? Well, how about if it had happened to her television? Or to *your* TV set instead?

Okay, okay, yeah that's a stretch. But TV sets around the country *are* going to be subjected to a transition soon which may literally make them inoperable. So here is what USDA is doing to help make that transition easier.

"Here's the situation," advised **Gary Allan**, Chief of the Universal Services Branch in the Telecommunications Program of Rural Development's Utilities Programs. "Television stations in this country currently generally broadcast their TV signals in traditional analog format and digital format as well. But after February 17, 2009, those TV signals will be broadcast in digital format only, and the entire nation will move to digital TV. So if your TV set isn't set up to accommodate that digital format, you won't have any reception on your TV."

This transition most directly affects consumers with traditional and conventional analog TV sets who don't subscribe to pay-TV service, such as cable TV

or satellite TV, and who currently receive only free over-the-air television through either a rooftop broadcast antenna or through set-top 'rabbit ears' antenna connected to their TV set.

"The reason that people who subscribe to cable or satellite aren't immediately affected," Allan explained, "is because all satellite customers, and most cable customers, have a 'set-top box' that can feed video in many formats, ranging from digital to conventional analog. As a consequence, any TV set currently driven by a set-top box shouldn't suffer any consequences on 'Conversion Day'."

Why is this happening?

Allan noted that in 2005 Congress passed the Digital Television Transmission and Public Safety Act (DTV Act) as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. "The DTV Act," he said, "directed the Federal Communications Commission to require full-power or large TV stations to cease analog broadcasting and to broadcast solely digital transmissions after February 17, 2009."

The reason is that the federal government wanted to free up communication frequencies that are currently used to transmit analog television signals, and instead make those frequencies available for public safety communications such as police, fire, and emergency rescue



"This 'digital-to-analog converter box' will do, for an old TV set, what the satellite TV or the cable TV set-top box does: it'll provide a signal that that old TV set can use," affirms RD's **Gary Allan** (left), as he and RD's **Mary Campanola** discuss the 'digital converter box' in front of them. After Feb. 17, 2009, TV signals will be broadcast in digital format only, so many TV viewers around the country may need to take measures, such as obtaining a digital converter box, in order to continue receiving TV signals after that date. Note the story on this page concerning what USDA has undertaken to help its customers—and its employees—make that transition, as needed.—*Photo by Amy McGeehan*

communications. Second, the new broadcast standard provides clearer TV picture and sound quality, plus more programming choices. Third, the switch allows for commercial advanced wireless services.

Those who continue to use a conventional analog TV AND who do not have a cable or satellite 'set-top box' AND whose TV sets weren't made with built-in digital tuners—which are now standard on recent models—will need to acquire a 'digital-to-analog converter box' in order to receive TV signals after Feb. 17, 2009. "In essence," Allan advised, "this converter box will do for you what the satellite or cable set-top

box does: it will provide a signal that your old TV set can use."

"So you don't need to throw your TV set away," he added, "since it can still work—but it'll likely need this 'digital upgrade'." Those digital converter boxes are projected to cost \$40 to \$70, and can be found at various retail stores around the country.

Petra Schultze, a financial analyst in RD's Telecommunications Program, advised that, since this change is a federal mandate, the federal government is providing assistance—financial and otherwise—to ease that transition from analog to digital

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Ed Schafer *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees, As I settle into my new job here, I'm enjoying the opportunity to meet USDA employees in every agency, working across the country. I come away from each

encounter more impressed than ever with your dedication, professionalism, and the great work you do for our farmers and ranchers.

Recently, I had the chance to speak with some employees with a truly exceptional commitment to service. Over a video teleconference, I met with USDA's 20 agricultural advisors in Iraq serving on Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

The work they do is difficult and demanding. It requires enormous personal sacrifice. And yet, they persevere in their efforts and are providing tremendous help to the people of Iraq.

Agriculture is the second leading industry in that country, the second largest employer, and it is crucial to the economic revitalization of that nation.

For decades, Iraq's agricultural resources and infrastructure were mismanaged and neglected, and the industry is in need of reconstruction. The Iraqi people are experienced farmers, but they lack the latest innovations in research, technology, and planting techniques that are critical to a strong industry and plentiful harvests.

Our agriculture advisors are faced with a challenge that carries overwhelming humanitarian implications.

Their work ranges from establishing farm organizations and ensuring animal health to managing natural resources and rebuilding the technical capacity to clean and maintain irrigation canals.

Our advisors provide the same extension services in Iraq that USDA is known for in the United States, as well as research, resources, and reliable advice. They are providing training and education, seed and feed, and much-needed improvements in slaughterhouses and hatcheries. They are removing barriers in connectivity and communications to help people work more efficiently.

We also discussed the current situation in Iraq. Our employees tell me security has improved, which lets them interact more with

the Iraqi people, making their mission easier.

What struck me most was how much satisfaction these advisors take from their work. They mentioned repeatedly that the Iraqis they work with are generous, courteous, friendly, and really welcoming of USDA services. They invite our people into their homes.

So our advisors are confident our efforts are making a real difference. We're improving the agricultural industry, which is helping boost the economy. Our employees want the people of the United States to understand that their tax dollars are being well-spent. They are funding valuable work that is significantly enhancing the lives of the Iraqi people, as well as the stability of that country.

The work that our Provincial Reconstruction Teams are doing in Iraq today will yield benefits for years to come. The soil tilled and the seeds planted today will help build a nation that can provide food for its people and stability for its region. It reflects the truth that farmers have known for centuries: Hard work can bring about life-giving change.

I must say, it was a pleasure to hear about the work our advisors are doing and all they've accomplished. And this year we are working to be able to send another 15 technical advisors to help revitalize agriculture in Iraq. The USDA employees serving in Iraq are serving on a volunteer basis. I encourage those of you considering serving USDA in Iraq to talk to the people there now. The work is hard, and sometimes progress is slow, but the reward, both personally and professionally, of seeing your work have such meaning to so many people is priceless.

We continue to provide all the support we can for these fine men and women and their families. These brave individuals have committed a year of their lives to helping those in need, and we want to do our part to make that work as easy as possible. They mentioned they needed office supplies, so if you have any ideas on how to get them some, please let me know.

To the USDA employees serving in Iraq: thank you for your sacrifices, and thank you for your commitment to USDA's mission. Your colleagues in the U.S. are proud of you, we appreciate your hard work, and we look forward to welcoming you back home. ■

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TV transmission. Accordingly, the federal government, through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce, is helping consumers pay for those digital converter boxes. Specifically, it is offering up to two \$40 coupons per household. "Each analog TV will need its own digital converter box," she pointed out.

More information on the TVconverter Box Coupon Program, including how to request those coupons, can be found at www.dtv2009.gov or by calling 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY). "The coupons should be available in many retail stores across the country right now," Schultze noted. "But those coupons will only be available until March 31, 2009."

In order to help its customers—and its employees—make this transition, as needed, here is what USDA has undertaken.

Mary Campanola, the outreach coordinator for RD's Telecommunications Program, noted that on April 24 her agency presented an RD "Training Webinar" on the digital TV transition. "Our audience was our RD employees located around the country, we used a dial-in phone number, and our employees watched and participated on the Internet through their individual office computers," she recounted. "We provided information, and took questions and comments, about this upcoming transition."

In addition, RD has included a reminder, about the conversion from analog to digital TV, that can be found at www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/public-tv.htm. "That reminder, in

turn," said Allan, "provides a link to www.dtv.gov for more details."

As a related item, last September RD announced that it had awarded nearly \$5 million in RD public television digital transition grants to fund seven projects in six states—Minnesota, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Tennessee. According to Schultze, that funding from RD will assist rural public—not commercial—TV stations to install the digital transmission equipment that must be in place by Feb. 17, 2009. She advised that those grants are designed to ensure that public TV and emergency and educational programming continue to be provided in rural areas.

Karen Walker, Acting Deputy Associate Administrator for the Food Stamp Program in *continued on pg. 7...*

Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

WIREC:

USDA was one of the cosponsors of a recent international conference known as “WIREC,” or “Washington International Renewable Energy Conference.” Held in Washington, DC from March 4 to 6, WIREC served as an international platform for government, private sector, and non-governmental leaders to jointly address the goal of advancing renewable energy.

According to **Harry Baumes**, Associate Director of USDA's Office of Energy Policy and New Uses, more than 3,000 delegates from 113 countries, along with nearly 4,000 other participants, discussed ways their countries could develop renewable energy, promote sustainable development, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. “USDA's pledge at that conference,” he noted, “included a commitment, through the operation of USDA's Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program, to produce or save 682 million kilowatt hours of energy in Fiscal Year 2008 in rural America, while assisting more than 1,000 rural small businesses, and creating or saving over 2,800 jobs in rural communities.” Baumes added that USDA also pledged to foster the development and cultivation of switchgrass, which is one of the many cellulosic biomass alternatives to corn-based ethanol. A third USDA pledge, he noted, was to develop new markets, including waste-to-energy applications, for woody biomass culled from the nation's forests. “USDA also pledged,” Baumes said, “to increase the demand for biobased products with their significant opportunity for substituting for, and replacing, oil-petroleum-based products.”

Office of Communications speechwriter **Heather Vaughan**

pointed out that WIREC 2008 was the third global ministerial-level conference on renewable energy, following events in Beijing in 2005 and Bonn in 2004. India has been selected to host the next International Renewable Energy Conference in 2010.

The Cost To Raise A Child:

In March USDA released its annual report which details how much it costs to raise a child in America today. Titled “Expenditures on Children by Families” and released by USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, it noted that for middle-income families with a child born in 2007, the costs of providing food, shelter, clothing, and other goods and services will total \$204,060 by the child's 18th birthday.

“All expenses associated with raising children have continued to rise over time, particularly with regard to child care. However, that expense was a negligible component of the costs for raising a child in 1960 when USDA first produced this report,” advised CNPP economist **Mark Lino**, who authored the report.

“Since 1960, child-rearing expenses have changed noticeably,” he added. Specifically, the cost of providing food decreased from 24 percent to 17 percent of total child-rearing costs, while child care and education expenses increased from 2 percent to 12 percent of total child-rearing costs. “Housing remains the single largest expenditure during a child's 17 years,” Lino noted. “Housing averages 33 percent of those total costs.”

Lino pointed out that, in real terms, the overall cost of raising a child has increased 15 percent from 1960 to 2007. “A middle-income family in 1960 with a new baby could expect to spend \$25,230 to raise that child



Located at USDA's Video Teleconference Auditorium at the Department's headquarters in Washington, DC, Secretary **Ed Schafer** (left) is participating in a video teleconference briefing from Baghdad with USDA's 20 agricultural advisors serving on Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq. Those USDA employees are providing a variety of technical assistance efforts to that country. For more details, note the “Secretary's Column” on page 2 of this issue.—*Photo By Ken Hammond*

through age 17,” he said.

Lino noted that this report has been a resource for state agencies and courts in determining child support guidelines and foster care payments. “For a middle-income, two-parent, two-child family,” he said, “annual expenses for one child ranged from \$10,930 to \$12,030 depending on the age of the child, with expenditures on teenagers being the highest.”

This annual USDA report is now in its 48th year.

“No End To The Banana:”

The National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, MD was the site of a forum on March 26 that brought experts in international sustainable agricultural development together with USDA specialists and others engaged in preserving banana diversity. **Susan McCarthy**, senior analyst for strategic scientific initiatives at NAL who organized the event, said the forum coincided with a traveling exhibit from Bioversity International titled “No End to the Banana,” on display in NAL's main reading room during February and March.

Len Carey, public affairs offi-

cer for NAL, said both the forum and exhibit addressed the importance of the banana as a component of food security throughout the world, and the importance of genetic diversity to ensuring that they remain available. Among USDA participants in the forum, Agricultural Research Service technology licensing coordinator **June Blalock** discussed the implications of the International Plant Genetic Resources Agreement for germplasm repositories and research breeding programs. ARS international coordinator **Eric Rosenquist** gave an overview of research priorities for the “orphan tropic crops,” which is a reference to crops that are grown in the tropics and that generally don't fit into other large categories. **Susan Fugate**, head of NAL special collections, discussed the importance and need to preserve knowledge resources, complementary to preserving the genetic resources.

“Many parts of the world depend on banana crops as a staple,” McCarthy said, “but that is a precarious position if we don't protect the genetic diversity of the banana.”

—**RON HALL**

Employees *make these things happen*

RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

We're Using Software And Mapping To Keep Those Weeds In Check

It's springtime, which means that farmers across the country are busy planting their crops. This means, of course, that weeds are sure to follow.

So how do farmers kill weeds in their fields? That depends. Weed patches vary in size, shape, and composition, and often require different treatments, which may include different herbicides and rates of herbicides.

But scientists with the Agricultural Research Service are developing a computer-based decision tool and mapping system that helps farmers make more cost-effective and environmentally friendly choices about how to treat those weeds.

Lori Wiles, a weed ecologist with ARS's Water Management Research Unit in Fort Collins, CO, explained that a concept called "site-specific weed management" is a form of "precision agriculture" that encourages farmers to limit the amount of herbicides they apply to a field. While it's not really a new concept, it helps farmers identify which portions of their fields require treatment for weeds, and then target those areas for application. It's sort of like dabbing calamine lotion on each individual mosquito bite instead of dipping your whole arm or leg in it.

But Wiles and her colleagues in Fort Collins then attempted to make "site-specific weed management" easier and more practical by developing a software program called "WeedSite," which they are making available for free. "Growers run WeedSite themselves," she noted. "They use their computer mouse to draw weed maps of their fields on the computer screen. Then the program uses those maps to predict outcomes such as where herbicide is needed, the most cost-effective herbicides to use, and the number

of weeds likely to be left in the field after herbicide application."

"With this information," she underscored, "the software program computes the net benefit, in dollars and reduced herbicide use, to the grower from using site-specific weed management, instead of applying herbicides uniformly across the field."

But that wasn't all. According to **Mike Murphy**, an ARS hydrologic technician at the agency's Agricultural Systems Research Unit in Fort Collins, "Herbicides are needed to control weeds, but spraying where there are no weeds doesn't make sense for the farmer or the environment." So, with the help of colleagues at Fort Collins including ARS agricultural engineer **Paul Irvin**, ARS ecologist **David Remucal**, **Robert Waltermire**, leader of the U.S. Geological Survey's GIS and Remote Sensing Team, and several local farmers, Wiles is developing and testing a simple, low-cost approach to map weeds in fields. It's based on a grower mounting a digital still camera and a global positioning system or GPS unit on a tractor, taking photographs while driving across the farmer's field, and then matching those photos with GPS coordinates.

"Another software package that we're developing then estimates weed cover from the images, and then automatically constructs a map of weed cover for the farmer," said Irvin. "So, with this map and a sprayer, a farmer can easily locate and treat weed-covered sections, detect new weed invasions, and monitor changes in existing weed patches. With a click of the mouse, the user can view the image taken in a specific area to find out which weed species are present."

Wiles clarified that this more cost-effective and environmentally friendly mapmaking approach to combating weeds—by employing

ARS's WeedSite and mapping software, combined with the digital still camera and a GPS unit on a tractor—has, to date, been more in the 'education phase' and not the 'application phase.' She said that this approach has been taught in college-level courses in agriculture.

One way to move from the 'education phase' to the 'application phase' is through Cooperative Research and Development Agreements or CRADAs. Those are signed agreements between ARS and entities in the private sector to transfer, into the private sector, the technology that was developed by ARS employees. "And, because of a CRADA which ARS signed in March 2008 with a software company in Raleigh, North Carolina," affirmed **Gale Dunn**, an ARS soil scientist and technology transfer specialist in Fort Collins who developed that CRADA, "when the time comes to plant crops next year in 2009, there should be commercial software, which incorporates our WeedSite software, so that farmers will be able to create georeferenced weed maps to spray by."

"Prior to the CRADA, that capability wasn't there."

—**LAURA MCGINNIS**



ARS's **Lori Wiles** is testing a system to make weed maps in a farmer's field by setting up both a digital still camera, that

will automatically take pictures every four seconds, and a global positioning system unit, that will record the locations of those pictures.—**Photo by Mike Murphy**

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Recycling In The Forest Service Takes On An Added Dimension

"Recycling clothing isn't new," **Terry Reeves** pointed out. "During periods of scarcity in this country, such as during World Wars I and II, people did without a lot of items, including excessive clothing items. But there doesn't have to be a world crisis to start saving and making changes."

Reeves, a Forest Service receptionist or "front liner" at the Rager Ranger Station on the Ochoco National Forest in central Oregon, was referring to a precedent behind an initiative she recently developed, that is now being used throughout the Forest Service. She calls it "UNICYCLE" for "uniform-free-cycle."

"It's a program," she explained, "in which Forest Service employees collect surplus or

unnecessary and/or slightly used but still wearable Forest Service uniforms and uniform components, and then they share them with other Forest Service employees who have a need for those items."

"You might call it 'sharing of the uniform wealth'."

Reeves estimated that a goodly number *continued on pg. 5...*

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Joe Glauber is USDA's Chief Economist.

From January 2008 until his selection for this position Glauber served as Acting Chief Economist at the Department. He was the Deputy Chief Economist at USDA since 1992. During 2007 he also served as the Special Doha Agricultural Envoy at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. He continues to serve as chief

agricultural negotiator in the Doha round of the World Trade Organization talks.

Glauber worked as a senior staff economist for agriculture, natural resources, and trade at the President's Council of Economic Advisers from 1991-92. He began his federal career as an agricultural economist with the Economic Research Service in 1984.

Keith Collins, USDA's previous Chief Economist, retired from that position following 32 years of federal service, all with USDA. ■



Rebecca Bech is the Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

From April 2007 until her selection for this position Bech served as the Deputy Administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) in APHIS, after having been the Acting Deputy Administrator for Biotechnol-

ogy Regulatory Services from February-March 2007. She was APHIS's Associate Deputy Administrator for BRS Emerging and International Programs from 2003-07, where she provided guidance in policy and program implementation for plant and animal biotechnology regulations within USDA.

Bech began her federal career in 1986 as a Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Officer for APHIS in New Orleans. From 1989-93, while based in *continued on pg. 6...*

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of the agency's approximately 33,000 headquarters and field employees wear a Forest Service uniform as part of their daily assignments for the agency. "Employees who wear a Forest Service uniform do receive a 'periodic uniform allowance.' But the cost of uniforms just went up about 27 percent," Reeves advised. "So I figure that anything we can do to help each other keep our costs down for uniforms is a welcome effort."

Typical uniform items most in demand include Forest Service 'cruiser jackets,' both lined and unlined FS windbreakers, FS heavy field jackets, blouses, maternity blouses, long-sleeve and short-sleeve shirts, short-sleeve polo shirts, field pants, dress blazers, dress slacks, and FS insignia.

Reeves emphasized that uniforms which FS employees purchase with their clothing allowance or personal funds belong to those employees. However, employees may not, in turn, sell their uniforms. But they *are* allowed to donate them in-house, and also outside the agency such as to a non-profit organization as long as any Forest Service-identifying insignia are removed first.

Reeves said that, as part of her research into this initiative,

she reviewed the Finance and Accounting section of the Forest Service Handbook covering this matter, to ensure that this initiative was legal. "Yes," she confirmed, "recycling clean, in-repair, neat, and lightly worn uniforms and uniform components is legal."

So, how does this process work, both in her own office and agency-wide?

"Well, in our own office," she recounted, "it got started this past January because in our ranger district alone we had a full closet, several bags in the computer room, and an upright cabinet—all full of uniform components in storage. And I couldn't stand seeing the waste of perfectly good uniforms gathering dust and taking up much needed space."

So she gathered the items in question, separated them by size, style, color, and acceptable condition, and then logged the items onto a spreadsheet. The items, which took up two conference tables, were then made available to any local Forest Service employee who wears a uniform. "So they walked through the room and did their own picking and choosing—and that first recycling event saved over \$1,000 in uniform allowance expenditures," she said.

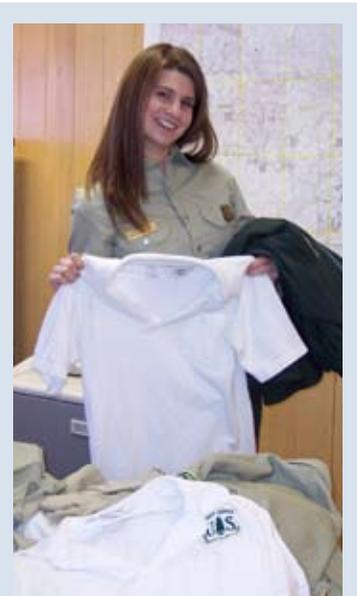
"For the process Forest Service-wide," Reeves then explained, "our regional public affairs staff developed a 'UNICYCLE' section, on our agency's Intranet website, that employees can use—and have been using—to post uniform items and pieces to be recycled. Those items include appropriate contact information."

Reeves noted that anyone in the Forest Service can browse the list and make the contact, and any agency office can use interoffice mail to ship a donated uniform to an employee at any other unit. "In fact," she quipped, "the most complicated part of UNICYCLE is explaining that it's *not* complicated."

"This is a 100-percent low-red-tape, self-managed activity," she continued. "I *don't* serve as a central repository for uniforms, either for my office or for the agency as a whole. But I *am* a resource to help agency employees list and then share their uniforms."

As an example of a self-managed activity, Reeves added, office 'family meetings' or new employee orientations are good opportunities for uniform recycling get-togethers.

"Plus," she pointed out, "it introduces, in a practical way, the Forest Service commitment



"As a new Forest Service employee, I saved my entire first year uniform allowance," affirms FS's Jamie Jaberg, as she shows off the uniform items she selected as part of a recent 'uniform recycling event' held on the Ochoco National Forest in central Oregon.—Photo by Terry Reeves

to leaving a smaller 'carbon footprint' as we carry out our agency's mission."

"I'd like to think that, because of everyone's cooperation and contributions, UNICYCLE is not only a good idea, but it's a good idea done right."

— **KATHY BOWMAN**

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Frederick, MD, she worked as a training specialist and an instructor to new APHIS PPQ Officers. She headed PPQ's newly-created National Pest Identification Services Unit, starting in 1993, and later served as Director of PPQ's Scientific Services Program until 1999. From 1999-2003 she was the coordinator of USDA's Invasive Species Initiative.

Ric Dunkle, the previous Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine, retired from that position following 28 years of service with USDA. ■



Mike Gregoire is the Deputy Administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services in the Animal and

Plant Health Inspection Service.

From March 2005 until his selection for this position Gregoire served as APHIS's Deputy Administrator for Policy and Program Development. He was the agency's Chief Information Officer from 1996-2005. From 1993-95 he served as the Chief of

Staff to [then] APHIS Administrator **Lonnie King**.

Gregoire served as the Budget Officer for APHIS from 1988-93. He began his career with APHIS as a budget analyst in its [then] Budget and Accounting Division in Hyattsville, MD in 1978. From 1976-78 he worked as a social welfare examiner with the Erie County Department of Social Services in Buffalo, NY.

Rebecca Bech, the previous Deputy Administrator for Biotechnology Regulatory Services in APHIS, is now that agency's Deputy Administrator for Plant

Protection and Quarantine. ■



Meryl Broussard is the Deputy Administrator for Plant and Animal Systems in the Cooperative State Research,

Education, and Extension Service.

From November 2002 until his selection for this position Broussard served as the Director of the Animal Systems Section within Plant and Animal Systems *continued on pg. 7...*

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Patricia Daniels*



Under an interim final rule issued in December 2007, participants in USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will, among other changes, begin to receive more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in the 'WIC food packages' that are provided to the estimated 8 million low-income women, infants, and young children who annually participate in that \$6.2 billion program.

For **Patricia Daniels**, this was the culmination of an effort which she has helped to spearhead for years. Daniels is the Director of the Supplemental Food Programs Division in the Food and Nutrition Service. In that position, where she has served since 1999, she is also Director of the FNS-administered WIC Program, and is the first registered dietitian to do so since WIC became a nationwide program in 1974.

"It took us 10 years to improve the WIC food packages to align them with the federal government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans," she explained. "Some of the complications in making that happen included the fact that it costs more money to add those three items to the package, and this is a discretionary nutrition assistance program here at FNS, not a mandatory one."

Daniels noted that this proposed change to the WIC food packages generated an estimated 48,000 comments to FNS. She said that was the highest number of comments received about any proposed regulation change in FNS, and is thought to be the second highest number of comments, to a proposed regulation change, in the history of USDA.

"But," she affirmed, "I think that the changes in the WIC food packages are the next step in a natural progression in FNS. We're putting far more emphasis on nutrition assistance, instead of just food assistance."

Indeed, one might look at Daniels' 33-year work history at FNS and conclude that the 'n' in 'Daniels' stands for 'nutrition.' She concentrated on nutrition while earning B.S. and M.S. degrees at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee and the University of Maryland in College Park, respectively. Then, after teaching general science to fifth graders for a year in Sumter, S.C.—where she was born and grew up—she worked as a research technician for a pulp and paper company in Columbia, Md., for two years. She analyzed soils,

looking for the best nutrients to determine where the company could grow the best pine trees for use in paper production. "You could say," she quipped, "that I focused on nutrition for the trees."

In 1975 she joined FNS's [then] Nutrition and Technical Services Division as a nutrition education specialist. In that role she worked with all of the agency's domestic nutrition assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program, the Child Nutrition Programs, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). As her career developed, she moved from providing technical assistance to the 'cooperators' of FNS's nutrition assistance programs to focusing on the policies behind those programs.

Along the way she also spearheaded efforts to develop educational materials for low-literate audiences participating in FNS programs. In addition, she introduced cultural competency training workshops for federal, state, and local nutrition assistance program 'cooperators.' "Those cooperators are the grassroots people that FNS relies on to effectively and efficiently get our programs to our target audiences," she pointed out. "I wanted to make sure that, through our FNS 'cultural competency training' workshops, our cooperators were better able to implement culturally appropriate services to the clients of our FNS programs."

Last Book Read: "A Thousand Splendid Suns," by **Khaled Hosseini**.

Last Movie Seen: "The Bucket List."

Hobbies: "Gardening and reading. I belong to the 'Sunday Brunch Book Club' which meets every other month in restaurants all over the Washington, DC metropolitan area."

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: "I like grits—but it's any breakfast where I have family members present."

Something I Don't Want People To Know About Me: "As an Aging Boomer, I've been developing a case of 'CRS'—which I'll translate politely for you as 'Can't Remember Stuff'."

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "In order to get the WIC food package changes ready for their full implementation by October 2009, we're focusing on many details, including making sure that participating grocery stores are stocking the newly eligible food items, revising the WIC checks, and updating our nutrition education messages to focus on these changes."

—**RON HALL**

in CSREES. He was CSREES's National Program Leader in Aquaculture from 1985-2002 and has chaired the governmentwide Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture since 1996. That Subcommittee is charged with enhancing the overall effectiveness of federally-administered aquaculture programs and reports to the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Before joining USDA, Broussard held several faculty

positions, including serving as a visiting professor in wildlife and fisheries, at Texas A&M University from 1984-85 and previously from 1979-80. He spent four years—1980-84—working in USAID-funded aquaculture development programs in the Philippines.

Ralph Otto, the previous Deputy Administrator for Plant and Animal Systems in CSREES, is now the agency's Associate Administrator. ■



Kent Connaughton

is the Regional Forester for the Forest Service's Eastern Region, based in

Milwaukee.

From June 2005 until his selection for this position Connaughton served as the Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry at the agency's headquarters office in Washington, DC. He was the Deputy Regional Forester for FS's Pacific Southwest Region, based in Vallejo, CA, from 2001-05. From 1998-2001, while at the Pacific Southwest Region he was the Project Manager for the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration, focusing on management and conservation of the National For-

ests in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.

From 1996-98 Connaughton was the Forest Supervisor of the Lassen National Forest in northern California. From 1993-96, while stationed at FS's Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, OR, he was the Assistant Director of Economic Assistance, responsible for the economic assistance programs that were part of the federal government's Northwest Forest Plan. He began his career with FS in 1978 at the Pacific Northwest Research Station as a scientist specializing in forest economics.

Randy Moore, the previous Regional Forester for FS's Eastern Region, is now the Regional Forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest Region in Vallejo. ■

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ARS hydrologic technician **Mike Murphy** steers with his left hand, and holds an automatic timer with his right hand, as he drives through a farmer's field in eastern Colorado. The still camera that is mounted onto his all-terrain-vehicle is automatically taking pictures every four seconds. It's one of the steps in making a "weed map," as part of ARS's effort to help farmers apply herbicides on the weeds in their fields in a more cost-effective and environmentally friendly manner. Note the story by **Laura McGinnis** on page 4.—Photo by **Lori Wiles**

Spreading The Word...continued from pg. 2

the Food and Nutrition Service, noted that FNS has initiated a program whereby persons interested in the Food Stamp Program also receive information about the digital converter box coupons. "We're including a mailer about the 'digital converter box coupon program' along with our information about the Food Stamp Program," she noted. "And we're making that information about the digital converter box coupon program available in Spanish and English."

"We also want to help get this information, about the digital converter box coupons, out to our constituents in targeted rural communities and remote areas," added FNS program analyst **Nancy Gaston**, who is serving as her agency's point person to educate FNS program participants about the digital converter box coupons. "So we're specifically targeting Indian Tribal Organizations, who administer FNS's Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, to make sure that flyers on the digital converter box coupon

program are distributed along with FDIPIR's commodity food packages."

The Farm Service Agency alerted its employees, at headquarters and field locations, about the upcoming nationwide transition to digital TV through an e-mail message dated April 25, sent to FSA state and county offices, and through an article in its employee newsletter. **Bill Schmalfeldt**, editor of the "*FSA Courier*," said that the article, titled "Will YOUR TV Work After Feb. 17, 2009," ran in the February 2008 edition of that publication.

"We wanted to give our FSA employees a heads-up, right away, about this change," he explained. "We wrote a light-hearted, futuristic story—but it is an important matter."

"We want our employees to know about it," he added, "not only for their own personal use but also so they can help get that information out to our rural constituents around the country." ■



"This looks like a Size-8 pair of women's field pants," concludes **Judy Hatch** (center), a business management assistant at the Rager Ranger Station on the Ochoco National Forest in central Oregon. Hatch, FS natural resources team leader **Bob Erhardt** (left), and FS range specialist **Jamie Jaberg** were participating in a recent 'uniform recycling event' on the Ochoco NF. It's a program in which Forest Service employees collect surplus or unneeded and/or slightly used but still wearable Forest Service uniforms and uniform components, and then they share them with other FS employees who have a need for those items. The initiative is designed to promote recycling and save money on the cost of agency uniforms. FS "front liner" **Terry Reeves**, who developed this initiative, said that it is now being used throughout the Forest Service. Note **Kathy Bowman's** story on page 4.—**Photo by Terry Reeves**



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D.O.B. **8-1-2001** Sex: **Male**
Hair: **Brown** Eyes: **Brown**
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